

Dear Colleague:

Vital U.S. interests in North Africa are increasingly challenged by growing regional instability. Terrorist incidents in the Maghreb have increased by more than 400 percent since September 11, 2001, and the emergence of Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has led to a spike in terror attacks. The single greatest obstacle impeding the security cooperation necessary to combat this transnational threat is the unresolved territorial dispute over the Western Sahara.

In 2007, at the urging of the United States and the United Nations, Morocco, our oldest ally and partner for peace in the Middle East, initiated a ground-breaking autonomy plan to resolve the more than 30 year-old conflict within the framework of self-determination for the Western Sahara. The Moroccan compromise plan received widespread support from the international community as a critical breakthrough for achieving peace and led to four rounds of UN mediated negotiations.

The UN Security Council, in resolution 1754 (2008), described Morocco's compromise efforts as "serious and credible." In pressing for adoption of the resolution the United States reaffirmed the policy initiated under President Clinton, and continued under President Bush, that, "Genuine autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty is the only feasible solution."

We remain convinced that the U.S. position, favoring autonomy for Western Sahara under Moroccan sovereignty is the only feasible solution. We urge you to join us in asking the President to both sustain this longstanding policy, and to make clear that the United States will continue to support this framework for negotiations as the only realistic compromise that can bring this unfortunate and longstanding conflict to an end.

The text of our letter to President Obama is attached below, as is a list of Members who signed our previous letter to President Bush (also attached) on this subject in April 2007. If you wish to sign onto this letter, please contact either of us, or Cesar Gonzalez (x5-4211, Cesar.Gonzalez@mail.house.gov) with Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Balart, or Dalis Blumenfeld (x5-3345, Dalis.Blumenfeld@mail.house.gov) with Rep. Gary Ackerman.

Sincerely,
s/Gary Ackerman s/Lincoln Diaz-Balart

2007 APR -6 PM 4:53
CRM/CES/REGISTRATION UNIT

Dear Mr. President:

Vital U.S. interests in North Africa are increasingly challenged by growing regional instability. Terrorist incidents in the Maghreb have increased by more than 400 percent since September 11, 2001, and the emergence of Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has led to a spike in terror attacks against both symbols of national government and institutions reflecting cooperation between the Arab world and the West. The single greatest obstacle impeding the security cooperation necessary to combat this transnational threat is the unresolved territorial dispute over the Western Sahara.

In addition to bringing peace to the people of Morocco and to the Saharawi, and shrinking the space for global terrorist elements to recruit and operate, resolving the conflict in the Western Sahara would have considerable economic benefits and improve the lives of millions of Africans. The entire Maghreb would finally be free to pursue serious economic integration, attract increased foreign investment, and realize the potential for regional trade and cooperation. All of these important goals are currently blocked by the continued conflict and the tension it creates between states in the region.

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After the four rounds of negotiations did not produce any real progress, the UN Secretary General's Personal Envoy for the Western Sahara, Mr. Peter van Walsum, issued an assessment to the Security Council in April 2008. He said, "My conclusion is that an independent Western Sahara is not an attainable goal that is relevant today because it lies at the root of the current negotiation process," and he urged that future rounds of talks be held only on the subject of autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty.

Unfortunately, following this bold statement the negotiations process stalled. Mr. van Walsum has been replaced by Ambassador Christopher Ross as the new UN Personal Envoy. We are hopeful that Ambassador Ross's appointment will result in the continuation of the talks based on Mr. van Walsum's assessment.

We remain convinced that the U.S. position, favoring autonomy for Western Sahara under Moroccan sovereignty is the only feasible solution. We urge you to both sustain this longstanding policy, and to make clear, in both words and actions, that the United States will work to ensure that the UN process continues to support this framework as the

only realistic compromise that can bring this unfortunate and longstanding conflict to an end. We look forward to working with you towards the success of this policy.

Sincerely,

Private Public Solutions provides representation for the Government of Morocco. More information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.